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REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are all the claims presently pending in the application. Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claim 1 is allowed and that claims 3- 4 contain allowable subject matter. This Amendment amends claims 2-6 and adds claims 7-20. Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current Amendment.

It is noted that the claim amendments are made to merely clarify the language of each claim, and not for distinguishing the invention over the prior art, narrowing the claims, or for any statutory requirements of patentability. It is further noted that, notwithstanding any claim amendments made herein, Applicant's intent is to encompass equivalents of all claim elements, even if amended herein or later during prosecution.

Claims 3 and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

This rejection is respectfully traversed in view of the following discussion.

I. THE 35 U.S.C. §112, SECOND PARAGRAPH REJECTION

The Examiner asserts that claims 3 and 4 of Applicant's invention are rejected as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Specifically, Applicant amended claims 3 and 4 to change "the toe board side" to read "the toe board."

Therefore, claims 3 and 4 have been amended to overcome the Examiner's rejection, and the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

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II. INFORMAL MATTERS AND CONCLUSION

The Specification has been amended to correct for informalities and other textual errors.

Claims 2 and 5 have been amended to overcome the Examiner's objection for informalities.


In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that claims 1-20, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: 2/26/03


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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification on page 2, lines 1-13, as follows:

However, it is difficult to mount the blower unit to the front bulkhead and the toe board in a narrow passenger compartment with a long steering support beam that has been mounted on the vehicle body. In particular, when fastening the blower unit to the toe board, the mechanic is forced to do the fastening work from below the steering support beam with [a] an uncomfortable posture. This work may lead to a risk that a mounting accuracy of the blower unit is deteriorated. In addition, it becomes difficult to fasten the blower unit, which has been so fastened with poor mounting accuracy, to the instrument panel. This work also may lead to a further risk that the mounting workability is deteriorated.

Please amend the specification on page 2, lines 20-25, continuing to page 3, lines 1 to 5, as follows:

With a view to solving the problems, a blower unit mounting structure according to a first aspect of the present invention, comprises an instrument panel, a steering support beam and a blower unit. The instrument panel formed in such a manner as to be vertically divided into an upper panel and a lower panel along a transverse direction of a vehicle body. At least the steering support beam and the blower unit are assembled to the lower panel to form a unitized component. The unitized component is mounted on the vehicle body before the upper panel is mounted on the vehicle body.

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Please amend the specification on page 3, line 25, continuing to page 4, lines 1-5, as follows:

It is [preferably] preferable that the mounted for mounting a blower unit further comprises the steps of: preparing a recessed portion mounted on a tow board and a leg portion which is mounted on the blower unit and is extended toward the tow board; and engaging the leg portion with the recessed portion.

Please amend the specification on page 4 lines 24-25, continuing to page 5, lines 1-9, as follows:

In Fig. 1, reference numeral 1 denotes a vehicle body. An instrument panel 2 is mounted at the front of a passenger compartment of the vehicle body 1, and a steering support beam 5 is provided in the interior of the instrument panel 2 in such a manner as to extend transversely of the vehicle body 1. In addition, a [blower] blower unit 7 is disposed in the interior of the instrument panel 2. The blower unit 7 is supported on the instrument panel 2 and the steering support beam 5 at the rear thereof and is supported on a front bulkhead 9 and a toe board 10 of the vehicle body 1 at the front thereof.

Please amend the specification on page 5, lines 10-19, as follows:

To specifically describe the structure of the respective constituent members, as shown in Figs. 2[,] and 4, the instrument panel 2 is formed in such a manner as to be divided vertically into an upper panel 12 and a lower panel 13 along the transverse direction of the vehicle body 1. In

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addition, these panels 12, 13 are constructed to individually be mounted to the vehicle body 1. In this case, the instrument panel 2 is vertically divided at, at least, a position where a glove box 14 is included in a lower panel 13 side.

Please amend the specification on page 7, lines 20 to 25, as follows:

On the other hand, as shown in Fig. 3, brackets 35 are provided on a rear side of the heater and ventilation unit 16 in such a manner as to extend leftward and rightward, respectively, therefrom. Accordingly, the heater and ventilation unit 16 is fastened to the lower panel 13 with bolts (not shown) via the brackets 35 [(not shown)].

Please amend the specification on page 8, lines 1-6, as follows:

Brackets 36 are provided on a front side of the heater and ventilation unit 16 in such a manner as to extend upwardly. Accordingly, the heater and ventilation unit 16 is fastened to the vertical wall surface 9a of the front bulkhead 9 with bolts (not shown) via the brackets 36 [(not shown)].

Please amend the specification on page 8, lines 10-12, as follows:

Firstly, an assembling mechanic integrally mounts the steering support beam 5 and the blower unit 7 to the lower panel 13 so as to construct a unitized component 40.

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Please amend the specification on page 10, lines 19-25, continuing to page 11, lines 1-5, as follows:

In this case, since the steering support beam 5 and the blower unit 7 can be mounted on the lower panel 13 [at an outside] at a location outside of the vehicle where good workability can be provided, the mounting workability and accuracy can be improved. In particular, since the steering support beam 5 is mounted on the lower panel 13 before they are mounted on the vehicle body 1, the mounting accuracy of each [other] component can be improved, whereby a minimum gap can be set between them. Therefore, the space efficiency is improved. In addition, the rigidity of the lower panel 13 can be improved by unitizing the steering support beam 5 and the blower unit 7 onto the lower panel 13.

IN THE CLAIMS

The claims were amended, as follows:

2. (Amended) The blower unit mounting structure as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising:

a front bulkhead including a vertical wall [vertically wall] surface with an opening,
wherein a duct of the blower unit is connected to the opening for [taking] providing
outside air into the blower unit.

3. (Amended) The blower unit mounting structure as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising:

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a toe board having a recessed portion, wherein said blower unit comprises[:] a leg portion extended toward the toe board [side] and engaged with the recessed portion.

4. (Amended) The blower unit mounting structure as set forth in Claim 2, further comprising:

a toe board having a recessed portion, wherein said blower unit comprises[:] a leg portion extended toward the toe board [side] and engaged with the recessed portion.

5. (Amended) A method for mounting a blower unit, said method comprising: [the steps of,]

preparing an instrument panel including an upper panel and a lower panel that are vertically divided along a transverse direction of a vehicle body;

forming a unitized component by assembling at least a steering support beam and a blower unit to the lower panel;

mounting the unitized component on the vehicle body; and

mounting the upper panel to the vehicle body.

6. (Amended) The method for mounting a blower unit as set forth in Claim 5, further comprising: [the steps of]

preparing a recessed portion which is mounted on a toe board; [board and]

preparing a leg portion which is mounted on a blower unit and is extended toward the toe

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board; and

engaging the leg portion with the recessed portion.